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ABSTRACT

The specially funded program described in this report was implemented at the University of Minnesota's General College in Fall 1979 to promote the academic improvement and long-range retention of high-risk Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. After introductory material discussing the process involved in securing program funds from the central university administration, the report examines the educational structure of the program. Three instructional packages are described, which provide a three-quarter set of modules for each target group, incorporating skill development courses, cultural and ethnic classes, and tutorial opportunities. Additionally, a rationale is provided for "sheltering" the program participants from each other and from the University as a whole. Program evaluation criteria employed after the first quarter of operation are then identified, including the collection of demographic information to determine the types of students who profit most from the program, and the examination of traditional measures of academic success, such as grade point average, ratio of credits completed to those attempted, and the retention rate of program students from Fall 1979 to Winter 1980. The report then outlines program costs for Fall 1979, with special emphasis placed on start-up expenses and the cost of developing a special package for non-English-speaking students. (JP)

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IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ENTRY-LEVEL RETENTION PROGRAM FOR HIGH-RISK COLLEGE FRESHMEN.

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10 July 1980

PAPER PRESENTED AS PART OF A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION/SPECIAL INSTEREST GROUP FOR TWO YEAR COLLEGE RESEARCH CONFERENCE (COLUMBUS, OH, JULY 10, 1980)

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Implementation of an Entry-Level Retention Program

for High-Risk College Freshmen

Introduction

The 1979 session of the Minnesota Legislature appropriated a special fund to the University of Minnesota for a two-year program of student retention--that is, for the University to use in devising incentives to encourage students to continue their educations instead of dropping out after a brief period of schooling. The target groups for this legislative special were the so-called "high-risk" students--especially representatives of minority groups from traditionally "non-academic" populations. This report deals with the General College's contribution to the University's effort at student retention during the 1979-80 academic year. Since this is a preliminary report, it concentrates on the origin of the General College retention plan in the summer of 1979 and on the implementation of the General College retention program during the fall quarter, 1979.

In summer, 1979, the General College applied to the University of Minnesota central administration for funds to mount a retention program for four groups of students. The College's application was only partially successful. In late summer, 1979, the University central administration allotted the General College $52,700 for the purpose of planning and developing a retention program for two groups: entry-level American Indians and entry-level Chicano/Latinos. These funds constituted the University's allocation for the first year of the General College's 1979-81 retention program. Since

the allocation was made late in the summer of 1979, the College began immediate planning with the intention of having a working program ready for students arriving in fall quarter, 1979.

In the process of designing the General College's retention program, it became evident that a feature of the original plan--a component serving Black students--was desirable. Accordingly, the General College channelled whatever resources were available from its own budget into the retention program in order to extend it beyond that which was supported by University funds. With this additional money, it was possible to plan a program for three groups--American Indians, Chicano/Latinos, and Blacks. For each of these groups of students, the College mounted a Pilot Education Program (PEP) comprising three parallel but distinct Pilot Education Packages.[1]

In accepting University funds for a new, untried program (and in expending its own slim resources for an experimental effort), the General College assumed an obligation to account accurately for the manner in which the money was spent and to demonstrate that such expenditures were in accordance with the University's (and the Legislature's) general understanding of the purposes and objectives of a student retention program. At the same time, it was recognized that a careful record of costs and a well-designed system of evaluation of methodology and outcomes were essential to the eventual full report that would be necessary at the completion of the first year of the program. What follows is a partial fulfillment of the College's obligation to account for funds spent on its retention program: a report on the General College PEP program, including a description of its components; an evaluation of its first quarter of operation; and a specification of the program's costs through fall quarter, 1979.

Program Description

The General College's retention program is founded on the premise that providing means of encouraging academic improvement will result in the long-range retention of those students who, by traditional measures, would ordinarily be expected to fail or drop out of the University. These are the so-called "high risk" students; in the past they have often come from groups that comprise ethnic and racial minorities in the society at large. The basic educational structure designed for these students in the General College retention program is the Pilot Education Packages (PEP).

The PEP package for each of the three groups of students—American Indian, Chicano/Latino, and Black—consists of components specifically designed to be relevant to the characteristics of the students enrolled. Each is a three-quarter (full academic year), integrated, interdisciplinary set of modules consisting of skills development courses (reading, writing, speaking, mathematics); subject-matter courses focusing on the cultural values of each ethnic group; support seminars offering tutorial assistance and "survival" information (economic, social, and educational); career-planning sessions; and individual advising and counseling.

Built into the design of the General College retention program was a deliberate "sheltering" of each group of PEP students, not only from each other but also from the University student body in general. That is, for the first two quarters of the academic year, each PEP group did all of its course work separately. The gradual integration of PEP students into the general student body began during the third quarter of the academic year. In every instance in which it was possible, qualified ethnic-group instructors, counselors, and peer advisors were recruited for each of the functions in each of the PEP package modules. Members of the University's

Consolidated HELP Center staff participated in various ways as advisors and counselors to students enrolled in the PEP program. At this stage of the program's development, it is already clear that minority and ethnic instructors for the PEP packages are imperative and that more of them will be necessary for next year's program. An effort is already being made to contact some who might be available.[2]

Of the three PEP packages comprising the retention program, the two for American Indians and Blacks were most readily planned, staffed, and implemented. The Chicano/Latino package, however, presented special difficulties. Since the planners of the Chicano/Latino package did not know in advance that some of the students recruited for it were monolingual, a problem arose at the outset. As the program began in the fall of 1979, the College was confronted with two different groups of Chicano/Latino students, each with somewhat different educational needs: some bilingual (Spanish/English) speakers and some monolingual (Spanish-speaking only) students. Since provision had originally been made only for bilingual Chicano/Latino students, a second Chicano/Latino PEP package had to be hastily designed and implemented to meet the special needs of the monolingual Chicano/Latino students. Special instructors, tutors, and peer advisors had to be recruited and trained. The total cost of the Chicano/Latino package was thus increased beyond what had been originally allocated for that part of the total program.[3]

Program Evaluation

A definitive evaluation of the General College retention program obviously cannot be made on the basis of data from one quarter of operation. A full report of the program would include an evaluation of each course in

each individual PEP package and an assessment of the program's effectiveness in terms of student retention over a period of time. Such a report will be initiated at the conclusion of the first year of the program's operation—that is, at the end of spring quarter, 1980.

Even at this point in the development of the retention program, however, there are some observations that may be made about its effectiveness. There is, for instance, reason to believe that the PEP package concept is an effective instructional mode for the General College retention program. There is also evidence that the instruments devised to measure the program's effectiveness thus far will be adequate to assess the impact of the total 1979-80 program on student retention.

The program's fall quarter, 1979, evaluation effort was centered on two aspects of the program.[4]

1. Demographic profile of students enrolled in the PEP program. In order to focus the retention program on the special needs of students in the individual PEP packages, information on the characteristics of these students was accumulated: academic histories, cultural and social backgrounds, the level of study skills and academic motivation, and other self-reporting concerns. (Perhaps no single group of students in the history of the General College has been so minutely examined and monitored.) Demographic information of this kind will assist PEP program planners in determining what types of students profit most from the program, what kinds of students should be recruited in the future, and how the program can be modified to serve these and future students.

2. PEP students as evaluated by traditional measures of academic success. In a preliminary evaluation of the success rate of the PEP packages at the end of the fall quarter, such indicators as grade-point averages, ratio of

credits completed to those attempted, and the retention rate of students in the program from fall quarter, 1979, to winter quarter, 1980, were examined.

The evaluation instruments employed for this preliminary report will, in all likelihood, be the indicators used in the more extensive evaluation of the General College retention program at the end of the academic year. In the meantime, PEP staff members believe that the evaluation verifies the efficacy of their efforts thus far and that, based on results up to this point, the program can be declared a success. Of particular note, for instance, are such summary details as the following:

Retention Rate: Fall, 1979, to Winter, 1980	
PEP I (American Indian)	92% retention
PEP II (Chicano/Latino)	98% retention
PEP III (Black)	94% retention

Program Costs

In the summary of PEP costs for fall, 1979, particular attention should be given to the expenditures for the two Chicano/Latino packages, which together account for $10,910, or 62%, of the entire fall-quarter instructional costs for the three PEP packages. This heavy outlay for the Chicano/Latino students was made necessary by the need to devise two specialized—and, for the most part, separate—Chicano/Latino packages, one for monolingual students and one for bilingual students.[5] For the ten students enrolled in the monolingual package (originally eleven students enrolled, but one student dropped out early in the quarter), the College hired extra instructional staff from the Department of Spanish-Portuguese graduate-student teaching pool.

Per-student costs for each of the two PEP packages funded by the University's central administration are as follows:[6]

PEP I (American Indian)	$5,295 ÷ 25 = $212
PEP II (Chicano/Latino)	
Monolingual	2,103 ÷ 10 = 210[7]
Bilingual	8,807 ÷ 30 = 294

Of particular concern to the PEP program administrators is this fact about the future: As the College is increasingly required to hire "outside" instructional staff, costs for the Chicano/Latino packge will increase proportionately in 1980-81. Previews of costs for winter and spring quarters, 1980, show this increase already appearing. Fortunately, in the 1980-81 budget, this growing obligation can be met from two sources: 1) the funds preserved by phasing out the monolingual Chicano/Latino package and 2) the funds saved by the non-renewal of start-up costs.

With respect to the monolinguals, Jose Cortez, Director of Juarez/Humphrey Chicano/Latino Supportive Services, has been informed that the General College will not offer a Chicano/Latino monolingual package during the 1980-81 academic year. According to Mr. Cortez, who is the OMSSA recruiter for Chicano/Latinos, recruitment is being focused on Chicano/Latino students who have either a high-school diploma or a GED certificate. If there are any migrant students who do not meet either of these two requirements, he has said that they will be referred to the University's ESL program.

With respect to point 2, above, the second source of instructional funds in 1980-81 is the reallocation of start-up money. In 1979-80, $10,198 was used for this purpose during the period September 16-30, 1979. Members of the PEP staff worked during these two weeks to plan their diverse and

separate packages, to coordinate their individual responsibilities, and to prepare teaching and evaluation strategies for their courses. In addition, two members of the General College staff were employed to construct special courses for PEP students. Finally, part-time funding was provided for Student Development (CSD) to devise an evaluation instrument for the PEP program.

The total of evaluation costs for fall quarter, 1979, does not give a completely accurate picture of evaluation costs. The sum of $2,124, reported under evaluation, was used as replacement money for a member of the General College's CSD Division who conducted career-orientation seminars for students in the various PEP packages.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Even at this preliminary stage of evaluation, there is a convergence of evidence—this report, its corresponding documents, verbal reports and other formal and informal sources—that supports the conclusion that the General College academic retention program is accomplishing the retention goals envisaged for it by the College and by the University. Of course, like all new experimental efforts, the planning and implementing of the PEP program was not without occasional glitches, snafus, and foul-ups. Nevertheless, the planners of PEP are convinced that the aim of encouraging students to continue their studies in the University can be achieved by an educational model like the PEP program. Viewed at this point, the program seems to be working: the administrative machinery is functioning smoothly, and the individual PEP package staff members are beginning to meld into cohesive and effective teaching teams.

With respect to future needs of the program, some points have already been mentioned. The pressing need for more ethnic and minority-group staff members, for instance, was noted above. At this point, it is impossible to predict how many of the 1979-80 staff and consultants will be available in 1980-81.

On the basis of experience with PEP students thus far, it is clear that one part of the PEP program that will require increased attention and commitment is the career-planning module in each of the packages. PEP staff members report that too many PEP students have unrealistic career expectations. Accordingly, staff members recommend that the career-planning seminars be extended in scope and that attendance be required for all PEP students. To follow this recommendation would, of course, require an increase in funds from some source. The General College administration has pointed out that the College itself cannot afford increased expenditures for the PEP program without jeopardizing its primary commitment to the majority of its students in its other programs.

There is another consideration that grows ineluctably from the College's experience with PEP this year. Within the University there is a large segment of the student body whose retention probabilities could be significantly improved by the kind of academic assistance provided by the General College PEP program. There is, for example, the increasingly large number of Asian/Pacific students for whom a separate PEP package is desperately needed. Such a view has been expressed by Dr. Nobuya Tsuchida, Director of the University's Asian/Pacific American Learning Center.[8]

Another category of retention concern in the University is the growing number of foreign/international students who might advantageously avail themselves of instruction, not through the PEP program, but through the

General College's Commanding English program.[9] Dr. Tsuchida and Mark Landa, Coordinator of the English Program for International Students, agree that there is a large number of foreign/international students in the University who could profit, either from enrolling in the Commanding English program, or from using parts of the program as a supplement to their work in ESL.

To summarize, there is little doubt that there are many students in the University for whom effective retention aid is required. The plight of these students ought to be a matter of serious concern to the central administration of the University.

Footnotes

[1]For convenience in this report, the acronym "PEP" is used with both "program" and "package." The "PEP Program" is the total General College retention program; "PEP package" refers to the individual parts—for each of the minority groups—that comprise the whole program. "PEP I" designates the package for American Indians; "PEP II" refers to both parts (bilingual and monolingual) of the Chicano/Latino package; and "PEP III" denotes the package for Black students.

[2]During 1979-80, Professor Hinojosa-Smith, Chairman of the Department of Chicano Studies, graciously consented to supervise the fall-quarter offering of Migrants in Minnesota. In winter quarter, 1980, the course, Chicano History: A Historical Survey, was supervised by Professor Arturo Madrid, Associate Dean and Executive Officer of the College of Liberal Arts. The course instructor was Paul Carrizales, Instructor/Counselor in the

Reading Skills Center of the Office of Student Affairs. In addition, the Arts, Communication, and Philosophy (ACP) Division of the General College is presently negotiating with Ms. Flo Wiger of the Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs to teach in the American Indian package during the 1980-81 academic year.

[3]Among PEP program staff members there is some concern about the recruitment of monolingual students for the program by the University of Minnesota Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs (OMSSA). PEP staff members have, for instance, made the following points about this practice:

-- The costs of a PEP package for monolingual Chicano/Latinos, in addition to a package for bilingual Chicano/Latinos, impose an unduly heavy strain on the General College retention budget for one segment of the student population.

-- Since some of the monolingual students recruited for PEP in 1979-80 had not had previous educational training equivalent to that of American high schools, the need for remedial instruction for them has been extensive.

-- Since the monolingual Chicano/Latinos' previous English-language training had been minimal, they were not adequately prepared for the college-level English as a Second Language (ESL) program. (Eligibility for admission to ESL requires a minimum score of 45 on the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency.)

-- Since monolingual Chicano/Latino students are extremely "high-risk" students—much more so than others recruited for the General College retention program—it can be said (and indeed it is being said) that OMSSA's recruitment of such students is an instance of recruiting for failure rather than recruiting for success.

[4]The evaluation report is the work of Professor John Romano of the General College Division of Counseling and Student Development, and of his assistant, Miss Joan Garfield.

[5]See footnote 3.

[6]Per-student costs for PEP III (Black) are not included because much of the instruction for this package is in regularly scheduled General College classes.

[7]This reported cost of the monolingual packages does not include $1,662 of "free," one-time-only, instruction. If this amount were included, per-student instructional costs for monolinguals would be $377.

[8]At the time of this writing, Dr. Tsuchida and Professor Sandra Dylla Flake, Coordinator of the ACP Division's Commanding English program, have submitted an Educational Development Program (EDP) grant proposal for the funding of such a PEP package.

[9]This year the General College's Commanding English program for foreign/international students was funded from an EDP grant. Since such a program is quite expensive, it is doubtful that the College itself could assume the fiscal burden of this program in the future.

PEP Schedule: Fall, 1979

Required Courses

PEP I (American Indian):

1405	(3 cr)	Communication Skills: Fundamentals of Usage and Style
or		
1421	(4 cr)	Writing Laboratory: Personal Writing
1708	(2 cr)	Support Seminar (see attachment)
1831	(4 cr)	Special Topics: Chemical Dependency (see attachment)

PEP II (Monolingual Chicano/Latino):

1278	(3 cr)	Special Topics: Migrants in Minnesota (see attachment)
1409	(4 cr)	Individual Study: Grammar
1429	(3 cr)	Individual Study: Speech
1708	(2 cr)	Support Seminar

PEP II (Bilingual Chicano/Latino):

1278	(3 cr)	Special Topics: Migrants in Minnesota
1401	(3 cr)	Communication Skills: Vocabulary Development
1402	(3 cr)	Communication Skills: Reading, Comprehension, and Study Skills
1403	(1 cr)	Improving Spelling and Punctuation
1404	(1 cr)	Writing Grammatical Sentences and Developing Organized Paragraphs
1465	(3 cr)	Oral Communication: Interpersonal Communication
1708	(2 cr)	Support Seminar

PEP III (Black):

1405	(3 cr)	Communication Skills: Fundamentals of Usage and Style
or		
1421	(4 cr)	Writing Laboratory: Personal Writing
1461	(5 cr)	Oral Communication: Basic Principles
1708	(2 cr)	Support Seminar
1815	(5 cr)	The Afro-American Experience

Course Descriptions
(Special PEP Courses)

GC 1278 Special Topics: Migrants in Minnesota

The course will provide an analysis of main issues involved in migratory farm-labor conditions. As a social issues, the areas of study to be covered are education, legislation, and labor/employment. The need to relate academic knowledge to experiential knowledge is a prime concern. For this reason, guest lecturers and panelists will be used in the class as primary resource people. Films and news coverage will be discussed.

GC 1708 Support Seminar

This course is designed to develop the basic academic skills of entering freshmen and provide the information essential to their success as students on this campus. Through a combination of lectures, discussions, and classroom assignments, students will improve their performance on exams and written assignments, learn to cope with standard University procedures, and obtain information on the campus and community resources available to support their efforts.

GC 1831 Special Topics: Chemical Dependency

This course will not be a conventional course dealing with drug abuse. What we hope to do is look at the conventional literature on causes, effects, and treatment of chemical abuse to see if there are cultural values implicitly and explicitly assumed in this literature which may limit its applicability to specific population groups within American society, specifically American Indian individuals and families.

In order to look at the hypothesis contained in the above statement, we will be looking at a number of Indian and non-Indian chemical dependency prevention and treatment programs in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. We will also be looking at basic cultural differences between Indians and non-Indians to ascertain to what extent these basic differences must be taken into consideration in the cause/treatment/effect questions revolving around chemical dependency.

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